

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell today voted against the FY 2008 Legislative Branch Appropriations Bill, citing concern about increased spending for operating expenses for the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Capitol complex. The bill passed over Mitchell's objection by a vote of 216 to 176.

"I believe fiscal discipline starts at home," said Mitchell. "If we expect other parts of the federal government to control spending, I think we, in Congress, need to control ours."

The bill increases the operating budget for the U.S. House by 5 percent, nearly double the rate of inflation. [See: <http://www.bls.gov/cpi/home.htm>]

Mitchell cited particular concern about the portions of the "Green the Capitol" initiative, which includes \$500,000 for the installation of an ethanol gas station for House automobiles.

"I am a firm believer in energy independence, but we need to be sensible about how we get there, not just quick," said Mitchell. "This bill spends \$2.7 million to shift the Capitol power plant from coal to natural gas before it asks the Government Accountability Office to tell us how much the use of natural gas is going to cost us. To me, that seems backwards."

As a member of the House Committee on Science and Technology, Mitchell has been a staunch supporter of emerging technologies which increase energy efficiency and use new and alternative sources of energy such as solar power. Mitchell is a cosponsor of the Solar Energy Research and Advancement Act, H.R. 2774, which would help integrate solar sources into regional power grids. Mitchell is also a cosponsor of the Advanced Geothermal Energy Research and Development Act of 2007, H.R. 2313, as well as the Marine Renewable Energy Research and Development Act, H.R. 2313.

The bill also provides \$34 million for the Capitol Visitors Center, a 580,000-square-foot-facility that remains under construction at the U.S. Capitol Building two and a half years beyond its originally scheduled January 2005 completion date. Initially the project was estimated to cost \$265 million, but is now estimated at \$548 million, and not expected to be complete until September 2008.

"If we've learned anything from the Capitol Visitors Center , it's that Congress needs to look before it leaps," said Mitchell.

Before voting against the bill, Mitchell voted for an amendment by Rep. Jeff Flake, R-Ariz., to cut \$3.2 million from the Government Printing Office to reduce the number of printed copies of the Congressional Record it produces. The Congressional Record is available online at: www.thomas.gov. The amendment passed by a vote of 219 to 191.

In addition, Mitchell voted for an amendment by Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, to reduce the bill's overall amount by 4 percent. Despite Mitchell's support, the amendment failed by a vote of 177 to 231.